

SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE FOR FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEALS

(Make appropriate changes as applicable to reflect the programs operated)

This is the public release that we will send to (names of news media outlets and major employers contemplating layoffs) on ____ (date) ____.

(Local school food authority) today announced its policy for providing free and reduced-price meals for children served under the (insert National School Lunch Program, Commodity School Program and/or School Breakfast Program). Each school and/or the central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by any interested party.

The household size and income criteria identified below will be used to determine eligibility for free and reduced-price benefits. Children from households whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Children who are members of Food Stamp households, Cash Assistance (CA) units or Food Distribution Program on the Indian Reservation (FDPIR) households are automatically eligible for free meals. Foster children that are the legal responsibility of a welfare agency or court may also be eligible for benefits regardless of the income of the household with whom they reside. Eligibility for the foster child is based on the child's income.

USDA CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM INCOME GUIDELINES

July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005

<u>FREE</u>				<u>REDUCED</u>		
Family Size	*Year	**Month	**Week	*Year	**Month	**Week
1	\$12,103	1,009	233	\$17,224	1,436	332
2	16,237	1,354	313	23,107	1,926	445
3	20,371	1,698	392	28,990	2,416	558
4	24,505	2,043	472	34,873	2,907	671
5	28,639	2,387	551	40,756	3,397	784
6	32,773	2,732	631	46,639	3,887	897
7	36,907	3,076	710	52,522	4,377	1,011
8	41,041	3,421	790	58,405	4,868	1,124
Each Additional Member Add:	+4,134	+345	+80	+5,883	+491	+114

Application forms are being distributed to all households with a letter informing households of the availability of free and reduced-price meals for their children. Applications also are available at the principal's office in each school. To apply for free or reduced-price meals, households must fill out the application and return it to the school. Food stamp/CA/FDPIR families should submit the 2002-2003 "Free Meals Programs" direct certification form in place of an application. Applications or "Free Meals Programs" direct certification forms may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information households provide on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility and verification of data. Applications may be verified at any time during the school year by school or other program officials.

For school officials to determine eligibility for free and reduced-price benefits, households receiving food stamps/FDPIR or CA (not submitting the "School Meal Programs" direct certification form) only have to list their child's name, food stamp/FDPIR or CA case number; an adult household member must sign the application. Households which do not list a food stamp/FDPIR or CA case number must list the names of all household members, the amount and source of monthly income received by each household member, and the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. If the household member signing does not have a social security number, he/she must indicate that a social security number is not available. The application must be signed by an adult household member.

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price policy (title of determining officials) will review applications and determine eligibility. Parents or guardians dissatisfied with the ruling of the official may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis. Parents wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to (name, address, phone of the hearing official).

Households approved based on a food stamp/FDPIR or CA case number must report when the household no longer receives these benefits. Other households approved for benefits based on income information must report increases in household income of over \$50 per month or \$600 per year and decreases in household size. Also, if a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the levels shown above.

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